

Remote Learning Guidance for Families of English Learners

The [Coronavirus](#) pandemic required schools in America and around the world to shift to remote learning. [Remote learning](#) can include many different learning activities. Some learning is online (using a computer, tablet or smartphone connected to the Internet), while other learning is done without technology (such as doing art, exercise, getting outside, reading, writing, completing projects, doing worksheets). Learning activities can be different depending on your child's grade and language proficiency level.

With this guidance, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Department) hopes to work together with you to improve your child's educational opportunities during this period of remote learning.¹

So, What Can We Do Together?

To effectively engage together, educators and families should work as partners. Without opportunities to interact in person, it is more important than ever to build and maintain strong relationships. Below are ways in which both educators and parents can support children during remote learning.

How Educators Support Your Child(ren) during Remote Learning

1. School Districts Provide Translations/Interpretation Services

[Federal law](#) requires that schools must communicate information about any program, service, or activity that is called to the attention of parents to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand. School districts often share school materials, important news, and parent messages in additional languages. If you need information in your home language, please contact your local district/school for assistance. If you still are not provided with the important information you need in a language that you can understand, please contact [Department](#) staff to get help in addressing this.

2. School District Teachers Work Together to Support Your Child's Language Development

During remote learning, teachers are working together to find ways to help your child(ren) continue their English language development. During these times, content and ESL teachers are collaborating to plan and implement instruction for your children. Teachers are also working together to help students stay connected to their classmates and school community, and to feel safe and secure in the new remote learning classrooms. Your child's teachers are available to support you and your child(ren) through these difficult times.

3. Teachers Provide Support to Your Child

School districts have a [legal obligation](#) to provide English learners with English language development instruction and access to grade-level instruction and assignments during remote learning. Teachers of English learners at all English proficiency levels provide instruction and activities in a way that is designed to help support your child's understanding of the subject they

¹ These guidelines include tools and resources for students who are English learners and for the educators and families who are supporting their learning. The Department is providing this information as a service to educators and families and may revise or supplement the list from time to time. The list does not represent an endorsement or recommendation by the Department of any instructional resource, product, curriculum, or eLearning system.

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are learning. They analyze the instruction, readings, and activities to make sure that their students understand and learn the content. Additionally, teachers ensure that English learners at the earlier stages of English proficiency are provided with more support than students who have more developed English language development skills.

The Department has provided educators with [Guidance on Remote Learning for English Learners](#), which includes recommended strategies and resources to help teachers continue to provide services and to keep English learners engaged while they learn remotely.

- 4. English Learners with Disabilities:** The U.S. Department of Education recently issued a [fact sheet](#) clarifying that during the COVID-19 pandemic, schools must continue to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities while protecting the health and safety of students, educators, and service providers. In these extraordinary circumstances, special education teachers and support personnel may provide services differently than they were provided when school buildings were open and fully operational. If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), you should have received information or documentation about how the school will provide remote special education services.

Furthermore, in addition to the services they are entitled to as a result of their IEP, children who are also English learners should continue to be provided with the English language development services. The most recent guidance related to students with disabilities during COVID-19 can be found [here](#). In addition, the Department has provided a [Letter for Families of Students with Disabilities](#) so that parents better understand the rights their children are entitled during remote learning.

How You Can Support Your Child(ren) during Remote Learning

1. Support your child's engagement with their class and school

- ✓ Help your child develop a schedule and routine for remote learning at home.
- ✓ To provide opportunities for listening and speaking English, encourage your child to attend and participate in online class meetings and remote work as much as possible.
- ✓ Remind your child that using English with their teachers and classmates is the best way to learn English-- try to actively use their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to communicate and explore new ideas.
- ✓ Get additional English language practice by reading, using educational websites, or watching educational videos or television shows.
- ✓ Talk to your child about their schoolwork:
 - Ask about the ideas and subjects your child is studying. What topics or activities is your child excited about? What assignments are difficult?
 - Ask how your child feels about remote learning: What is going well? What is difficult?
 - Spend time together doing things your child enjoys. Tell stories, sing songs, read a book, play a game. Ask your child for ideas about activities you can do together.

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2. Speak to your child in your home language(s).

Speaking more than one language [has many advantages](#). Hearing more words and conversations in their home languages can help your child succeed in school. You will not confuse your child, set them back academically, or prevent them from developing English language skills by speaking your home language with your child. In fact, home language practice is important to help your child produce sounds, learn new words, use full sentences, tell good stories, and interact socially.

3. Join the [English Learner Parent Advisory Council](#) (ELPAC) in Your District.

All districts that have 100 or more English learners or where English learners make up 5% of the students at the school are required to have an English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC). Membership is voluntary and is open to you as a parent of an English learner or a former English learner. As an ELPAC member, you can use your voice to advise your district leaders or school committee members on all matters related to English learners. You may also provide school leaders with advice on topics that you believe are important to English learners, such as supports your child and other children need during remote learning, or establishing new language acquisition programs that promote your home language.

4. Explore online language learning resources to promote English language development.

If you are worried that your child needs more practice using English, you can contact your child's ESL teacher about resources for English practice. There are also many helpful online resources for English language learners and their families, including [Colorín Colorado](#), [Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center](#), and [Multilingual Living online magazine](#). Here are some more [Remote Learning Resources to Help Meet the Needs of English Learners](#) provided by the Department.

5. Read with your child, or encourage independent reading for older children daily. Find different ways for your child to [write at home](#).

There are many benefits and options for daily reading for children young and old. Materials may include traditional books or e-books, picture books, or books in your home language. No matter the story, you can talk about who, what, when, where, why, and even your own personal experiences. The possibilities are endless, and the discussion can be multilingual. Help your child write a letter to a family member. Read the first part of a book and have your child write their own ending to the story. Ask your child to draw a picture about a story in the book. Make a weekly journal recording activities, events, and feelings. **Also, don't forget your local library.** Libraries do so much more than simply lend books. Check with your library to find out if they will have summer reading programs even if they are only available remotely. They also often have books in other languages.

6. For Parents of High School Students: Connect with Your School Counselor

Continue to connect with your school counselor online or by phone for additional support with your child's individual college and career plan. You and your child can prepare by bringing questions about specific needs. For your [high school student](#), review the graduation

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requirements provided by your district and work with your child and counselor to understand what courses your child needs to graduate and what enrichment opportunities and electives are available to help your child explore career and college options. Your child's counselor will also help you find testing associated with courses, such as Advanced Placement exams, which are being administered online. If you have a high school senior who is applying to college, continue to connect with your school for support. Also, visit the [National Association for College Admissions Counseling](#) for updates on college events and due dates.

Finally, please remember that children express their feelings in many ways. During COVID-19, your child or teen may be showing signs of stress that you haven't seen before. These behaviors may be a normal reaction stressful event, or your child may need some extra help. See [Signs your Child May Need Help](#) or ask your child's teacher or school for help.

Resources for Families

[Language Routines for Multilingual Families](#) created by Paulina Mitropoulos, ELE Program and Assessment Specialist, Somerville Public Schools, available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French

Tips for Families with English Learners (From the Texas Education Agency)

- [English](#)
- [Spanish](#)
- [Vietnamese](#)
- [Arabic](#)

Find [school meals](#)

With school closures due to COVID-19 outbreak, many schools and community partners are preparing to make meals available to students when school is closed.

Learning Together at Home (From Colorín Colorado)

Ideas and resources for supporting your child's learning at home.

English and Spanish: <https://www.colorincolorado.org/learning-together-home>

English and Spanish: [Language Routines for Multilingual Families/ Rutinas de lenguaje para familias multilingues](#)

Larry Ferlazzo's 7 Tips for Parents Supporting Remote Teaching (Education Week)

<https://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/2020/04/09/video-7-tips-for-parents-supporting-remote-learning/>

Subtitles in English and Spanish.

Learning Language Every Day: Activities for Families (WIDA)

Activities to start conversations with children about their family, what they like to play, how they feel, what sounds they hear in their home or community, and the weather. English:

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<https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/learning-language-every-day-activities-families-english> (Also available in [Arabic](#), [Spanish](#) and [Chinese \(Simplified\)](#)).

Multilingual Books (From MATSOL)

Links to free online libraries with multilingual books and information for parents about reading with your child. <https://www.matsol.org/multilingual-literacy-resources-for-parents>

Free Educational Websites for Kids

Language Learning Programs

For learning English and other languages

- [Duolingo](#)
- [Mango Languages](#) (may be available online for free from your public library)
- [Rosetta Stone](#) (may be available online for free from your public library)

This document was created in cooperation with MATSOL (Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages).